

Message Text

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TAGS: MILI, MARR, CA, NATO

SUBJECT: CANADA CONSIDERING NEW PLAN TO BOLSTER NATO FORCES

1. CANADIAN DEFENCE MINISTER JAMES RICHARDSON SAID IN A PRESS INTERVIEW ON OCTOBER 15 THAT HE SUPPORTED US CONTENTION THAT FIRST PRIORITY IS WESTERN DEFENSE IN EUROPE, SECOND, IS DEFENSE OF SEA LANES TO EUROPE, AND THIRD IS NORTH AMERICAN DEFENSE. AS RESULT OF THIS CONCLUSION, RICHARDSON ANNOUNCED THAT HE IS STUDYING A PLAN THAT WOULD ALLOW HIM, ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS, BOTH TO DEMONSTRATE CANADA'S GOOD INTENTIONS TOWARD NATO AND EUROPE AND DELAY PURCHASE OF ONE TO TWO BILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF INTERCEPTOR AIRCRAFT.

2. ACCORDING TO THIS PLAN, CF-101 FIGHTERS USED BY CANADA FOR NORTH AMERICAN DEFENSE WOULD BE KEPT GOING LONGER THAN ANTICIPATED AND CF-5 FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, NOW IN STORAGE, WOULD BE USED AS GROUND SUPPORT FOR CANADIAN FORCES IN EUROPE. ADDITIONALLY, THE 5000-MAN CANADIAN NATO FORCES WOULD HAVE TO BE INCREASED IF THE CF-5 WERE TO BE ASSIGNED TO EUROPE.

3. LOCAL PRESS STORIES HAVE GENERALLY EMPHASIZED
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THAT PROPOSAL "IS ONLY UNDER STUDY AND NO FIRM DECISIONS

HAVE BEEN MADE", AND POINT OUT THAT THIS NEW PLAN FURTHER COMPLICATES ALREADY VERY COMPLICATED CANADAIN DEFENSE REVIEW AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS RE PURCHASE OF NEW AIRCRAFT. THE ALLEGED SHORTCOMINGS OF THE CF-5 AIRCRAFT ARE ALSO REPORTED.

4. COMMENT: RICHARDSON'S STATEMENT IS ONE OF FIRST PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS INDICATING THAT DEFENSE REVIEW IS SERIOUSLY TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION COMMENTS BY BOTH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER, AIR FORCE SECRETARY MCLUCAS, AND SECRETARY KISSINGER. IT SHOULD BE RECALLED THAT PRIOR TO THESE VISITS GOC PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS FOCUSED ON REDUCTION OR ALTERATION OF CANADIAN CONTRIBUTION TO NATO, WHEREAS NOW THE FOCUS SEEMS TO BE ON HOW CANADA CAN MAINTAIN ITS OBLIGATIONS TO NATO IN A RESPECTABLE WAY. EMBASSY ALSO NOTES THAT IVAN HEAD (PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT TO PRIMIN) INFORMED POLCOUNSELOR THAT HE RAISED THESE SAME POINTS WITH PENTAGON ON OCTOBER 6 AND REQUESTED US VIEWS OF SUCH USE OF CF-5. HE APPARENTLY NOTED TO PENTAGON THAT IF THIS PLAN IS PURSUED, IT MIGHT MEAN SOME MODIFICATION OF CANADA'S AIR ROLE IN NATO SINCE CF-5 IS MORE OF A TACTICAL SUPPORT AIRCRAFT. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE KNOWING IF REPLY TO HEAD'S INITIATIVE HAS BEEN FORMULATED AND SUGGESTS THAT IF US INPUT TO HAVE EFFECT IT SHOULD BE MADE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WHILE CANADIAN DEFENSE STILL UNDER WAY.
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